



A German William of Orange for Occupied Flanders: Frans Haepers, *Groot-Nederland*, and the Invention of Tradition¹

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Abstract: During the Nazi occupation of Belgium, an effort was launched by Frans Haepers and the editorial staff of the weekly journal *Volk en Kultuur* to invent a Flemish tradition around the Dutch cultural icon William of Orange. The effort was based on two German-language historical novels, Wilhelm Kotzde-Kottenrodt's *Wilhelmus* and Rudolf Kremser's *Der stille Sieger*, which were subsequently translated into Dutch. The article argues that the Flemish recourse to William of Orange as mediated through the novels and their translation was a way to negotiate the conflicting collaborationist politics of *Groot-Nederland*, favored by Flemish nationalists, and the *Großgermanisches Reich*, favored by Flemish Nazis.

Keywords: Willem van Oranje / William of Orange – Groot Nederland / Greater Netherlands – Vlaanderen en het 'Derde Rijk' / Flanders and the 'Third Reich' – Frans Haepers – Wilhelm Kotzde-Kottenrodt – Rudolf Kremser

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The 11 July 1942 issue of *Volk en Kultuur: Weekblad voor Volksche Kunst en Wetenschap* [Folk and Culture: Weekly for Völkisch Art and Science], a rightwing, semi-collaborationist Flemish nationalist journal, identified itself as the ‘Willem van Oranjenummer’ [William of Orange issue] and featured a full-size portrait of the ‘father of the fatherland’ on the cover. This is, to say the least, surprising. As Hendrik Conscience, the primary Flemish nationalist author, asserted in *Geschiedenis van België* [History of Belgium], Orange was the father of the Netherlands only in a narrow sense, limited to the ‘Unie van Utrecht [...] en het beginsel [...] van de vereenigde Provinciën van Holland [...] die sich werkelijk van het overige der Nederlanden afscheidden’² [Union of Utrecht and the beginning of the united provinces of Holland, which indeed separated themselves from the rest of the Netherlands]. The audacity of this renewed attention becomes apparent when we consider that 11 July is sacred to Flemish nationalists who, ever since the publication of Conscience’s *De Leeuw van Vlaanderen* [The Lion of Flanders] in 1838, commemorate on this day the 1302 Battle of the Golden Spurs as their founding myth. How can this newfound Flemish interest in the Calvinist leader of the Dutch rebellion against Spain two years into the Nazi occupation of Belgium be explained?

Frans Haepers, editor of the 11 July issue, is fully aware of this. In his editorial, he promotes Orange as the first to begin fulfilling the promise of ‘Dietsche’ unity and freedom that the Battle of the Golden Spurs represents:

Zijn taak werd niet volledig vervuld, maar het verval dat de zuidelijke gewesten gekend hebben na hun afscheiding van het noorden, hun blijvende strijd tot op heden tegen wezensvreemde invloeden is het klaarste bewijs dat alleen in den vasten band der Lage landen bij de zee voor elk dezer vereenigde provinciën de zekerheid, de vrijheid en de grootheid van het nationaal bestaan te vinden is.³

[His task was not completely accomplished, but the decline that the Southern regions experienced after their separation from the North, the continuous struggle to this very day against foreign influences, is the clearest evidence that for each of these united provinces the security, freedom and grandeur of national existence are only to be found in the firm connection of the Low Countries on the sea.]

The terms and ideologemes that Haepers deploys are consistent with the overall perspective of the journal.⁴ In this loosely shared editorial vision, the Southern Flemish regions aspire to a national union with the Netherlands (the North) that would preserve their cultural-geographical identity (‘on the sea’) against foreign cultural influence (French, but possibly also German). In other words, *Volk en Kultuur* cherished the goal of a *Groot-Nederland* (Greater Netherlands) in opposition to official German plans to incorporate Belgium and the Netherlands into a *Großgermanisches Reich* (Greater Germanic Empire) and saw in the invention of a Flemish

² H. Conscience, *Geschiedenis van België* (Antwerp, Brussels: Buschmann, Jamar, 1845), p. 451. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations in this article are mine.

³ F. Haepers, ‘Een Willem van Oranjenummer, op 11 Juli’, in *Volk en Kultuur* 2:24 (1942), p. 13.

⁴ The intellectual and cultural horizon of the journal has been thoroughly documented and analyzed in D. De Geest, E. Vanfraussen and M. Beyen, *Collaboratie of Cultuur: Een Vlaams tijdschrift in bezettingstijd (1941-1944)* (Antwerp and Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1997).

Orange tradition, to borrow Eric Hobsbawm's concept for this context,⁵ an opportunity to make that case to a Flemish readership under occupation.

The dispute between these conflicting visions was the crux of the collaborationist cultural politics of the occupied Flemish regions and the Netherlands. It not only conditioned relations to the administration of the Nazi occupation, but was the dividing line between rightwing movements. The Deutsch-Vlämische Arbeitsgemeinschaft [German-Flemish Working Community] or DeVlag in Belgium and the Nederlandsche SS, renamed the Germaansche SS in Nederland in 1942, stood for incorporation into the planned Germanic Empire, while the Vlaamsch National Verbond (VNV) in Belgium and the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging (NSB) in the Netherlands promoted the idea of a Greater Netherlands. The dispute was a matter of both domestic polemics and negotiation with the German SS and occupation administration within a constrained public sphere since the border between Belgium and the Netherlands was closed.⁶ It is within this context that the present paper examines Haepers' significant effort to graft William of Orange onto Flemish nationalist legend and to turn him into 'een officieel nationaal symbool voor Vlaanderen' [an official national symbol for Flanders].⁷

Cut off from the Netherlands, without a Flemish tradition of celebrating the Dutch rebellion against Spain led by William of Orange, who, after all, was also seen as the leader of the Protestants and therefore an unlikely icon for Catholic Flanders, Haepers did not have much to work with. Flemish presses, which had previously not done much to contribute to public awareness or interest in Orange, were unlikely to do so during the occupation. The Netherlands, in turn, had celebrated the 400th anniversary of the birth of William of Orange in 1933 with an onslaught of publications that did not abate during the occupation, but these were not available to Haepers. It was, however, the coincidence of the 400th anniversary with the *Machtergreifung* in 1933 that occasioned a small surge of German-language publications featuring William of Orange. In 1933 alone, eight books appeared: four historical novels, one dramatic play, one children's book, and two separate editions of a treatise on the psychology of Wilhelm the Silent. German publishers, ever vigilant for occasions to commemorate notable persons, had obviously prepared. The range of authors represented in the original eight publications included Nazis, nationalists, militarists, *Lokalpatrioten*, as well as regime-friendly and regime-critical Protestants. In the following two decades, the total number of German-language publications that deal with William of Orange and Philipp II would grow to twenty-seven and include the additional perspectives of exile writers, German-Jews, Catholics, and a Prussian pacifist.⁸

When we bring this picture more narrowly into focus, limiting ourselves to books published between 1940 and 1944, to begin with, and expressly relevant for German-Belgian relations as well, we are left with only two: Wilhelm Kotzde-Kottenrodt's *Wilhelmus von Nassauen: Ein Mann und ein Volk* [William of Nassau: A Man and a People], published in 1933 by J. F. Steinkopf

⁵ See E. Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 6, where he writes: 'More interesting [...] is the use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes.'

⁶ F. van den Bogaard, *Een Stoottroep in de Letteren* (s'Gravenhage: Stichting Bibliographia Neerlandica, 1987), p. 50.

⁷ De Geest et al., *Collaboratie*, p. 115.

⁸ For more detail on the German-language corpus, see S. Richter, 'Bridges of Misunderstanding: William of Orange in Nazi Era Literature and Its Aftermath (1933-1953)', in *Journal of Dutch Literature* 9:1 (2018), <http://www.journalofdutchliterature.org/index.php/jdl/article/view/173>. Accessed 17 January 2019.

Verlag in Stuttgart, and Ludwig Kremser's *Der stille Sieger: Der Roman eines fürstlichen Rebellen* [The Silent Victor: Novel of a Princely Rebel], published in 1941 by the Wiener Verlagsgesellschaft and serialized in the *Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden* [German Newspaper in the Netherlands] of the same year. What makes these books ideal for our purposes is not only the fact that both were translated into Dutch during the period in question: Kotzde-Kottenrodt's as *Wilhelmus van Nassouwe: 'Een man en een volk,'* translated by Johan Theunisz and published by Uitgeverij Ernst Dzur in Voorburg in 1944; Kremser's novel as *De vorstelijke rebel: Historische roman*, translated by none other than Frans Haepers, and published by Uitgeversfonds Were di in Antwerp, also in 1944. Even more significant is the fact that these two books, written by German and Austrian authors respectively, are the pre-translation anchors of Haepers' effort to graft Orange onto the Flemish nationalist cause in the William of Orange number of *Volk en Kultuur*, even if, at the same time, the books themselves participate in the conflict between *Groot-Nederland* and the *Großgermanisches Reich*. Jef van Eyck, member of the Germaansche Gilde [Germanic Guild] and the VNV, provides an introduction to the Nazi author Kotzde-Kottenrodt and a translation of the last pages of Kotzde's novel. For his part, Haepers introduces Kremser, offers a review of the novel in which he expressly calls for a translation into Dutch, and translates a passage. Kremser's novel was subsequently published in Belgium in Haepers' Dutch translation. Although Kotzde's novel was published in the Netherlands, it was not available in Belgium and not translated by Jef van Eyck. Johan Theunisz, the Dutch translator, was a key figure in the Dutch SS. In what follows, I will try to sort out the fraught politics and assess the meaning for Belgium of the cultural transfer of these two German novels into occupied Belgium and the Netherlands.

I.

Wilhelm Kotzde-Kottenrodt (1878-1948) was a prolific author of German historical fiction for adults and young people. He founded the *völkisch* youth organization Adler und Falken [Eagles and Falcons] in 1920 and became leader of the Artamanen in 1926. He held positions in the Nazi Ministerium für Deutsches Volkstum and, beginning in 1939, worked for das Institut zur Erforschung und Beseitigung des jüdischen Einflusses auf das deutsche kirchliche Leben [Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life].⁹ *Wilhelmus von Nassauen* was obviously planned for 1933 with Steinkopf, a Stuttgart-based publisher, with whom Kotzde had been publishing since at least 1919 and who published most of his significant novels during the Third Reich. Steinkopf also published *Der Christen-Bote* and sets store by the fact that this weekly periodical was censored in 1944.¹⁰ There is, however, no room for ambiguity about Kotzde's outspoken Nazi allegiance. Jef van Eyck provides additional details in his enthusiastic introduction in *Volk en Kultuur*. He claims that Kotzde was injured during World War I and landed in a hospital in Antwerp, where he first developed a fondness for 'het Dietsche volk'¹¹ [the Diets people]. For his William of Orange novel, he visited locations in Ghent, Antwerp,

⁹ For more on the Institute and Kotzde's role in it, see S. Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹⁰ <http://www.antiquariat-steinkopf.de/firmengeschichte/firmengeschichte1918-1950.html>. Accessed 1 February 2018.

¹¹ J. van Eyck, 'Willem van Oranje, een Roman door W. Kotzde-Kottenrodt', in *Volk en Kultuur* 2:24 (1942), p. 19.

Brussels, Mechelen, Leiden and Haarlem, during which time he participated in the annual *IJzerbedevaart* (Yser pilgrimage) and conducted personal genealogical research which pointed to Dutch ancestry.

It is not clear what led to the delayed translation of Kotzde's novel with Ernst Dzur in Voorburg in 1944—why then, when so much had changed since 1933? A look at the translator's biography, however, is instructive.¹² Johan Theunisz was a novelist in his own right. He was deeply involved in the cultural and historical politics of Himmler's SS-related *Ahnenerbe* [ancestral inheritance] project in the Netherlands.¹³ From 1940-43, he directed the Volksche Werkgemeenschap. He was engaged as a primary researcher for 'East-European colonization,' and in 1942 traveled to Berlin, Hamburg and Gdansk for archival research, results of which were published as *De Nederlandse Oostkolonisatie* [the Dutch East-European Colonization] by Uitgeverij Hamer in 1943. Among his other publications is a reflection on Christoph Stedings' *Das Reich und die Krankheit der Europäischen Kultur* [The Reich and the Sickness of European Culture], which he called *Het Rijk en de Nederlanden* [The Reich and the Netherlands] (1943). There can be no question about the auspices of the translation of Kotzde's novel, even if, as we shall see, Theunisz made noteworthy changes.

In contrast to Kotzde-Kottenrodt, it is difficult to discover more than the most rudimentary traces of Rudolf Kremser (1902-1992). Novels, plays, and collections of his political-historical essays are in library catalogues, but he is not included in literary histories and lexica of twentieth-century Austrian literature. Helga Strallhofer-Mitterbauer lists three Nazi-era prizes that Kremser won for his tragic play *Der Komet* [The Comet] in 1941 and again in 1944.¹⁴ Haepers' introductory sketch adds little information, except to note that Kremser attended commercial college and worked as a clerk in Vienna.¹⁵ He was thirty before he started writing. The fact that Haepers is aware of works in progress, as well as the tone of the piece, suggests the possibility of a personal acquaintance.

More is known about the Wiener Verlagsgesellschaft, which first published *Der stille Sieger* in 1941. It was established in the late nineteenth century as the Adolf Luser Verlag and was among the foremost 'völkisch-national ausgerichtete Verlage in Österreich' [völkisch-nationalistically oriented publishers in Austria]. After the *Anschluß*, the Luser Verlag was bundled with other presses under the auspices of the DAF (Deutsche Arbeitsfront), which assured it access to paper

¹² For Theunisz, see: I. Schöffler, *Het nationaal-socialistische beeld van de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), pp. 231-2; M. Beyen, *Oorlog en verleden: Nationale geschiedenis in België en Nederland, 1938-1947* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002), pp. 176-85.

¹³ According to Hannjost Lixfeld, *Ahnenerbe* was the scholarly branch of the SS, "set up for the militarily occupied 'Germanic' states of Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark [...] to help realize the vision of a Great German Reich under German leadership." "German cultural scholars and folklorists as well as scholarly collaborators from several of the affected countries" participated in the program. H. Lixfeld, *Folklore and Fascism: The Reich Institute for German Volkskunde*, ed. and transl. by J. R. Dow (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 122. For more on the work of Ahnenerbe in the Low Lands, see: B. Henkes and B. Rzoska, "Volkskunde und 'Volkstumkunde' der SS in den Niederlanden," in *Griff nach dem Westen: Die "Westforschung" der völkisch-nationalen Wissenschaften zum nordwesteuropäischen Raum (1919-1960)*, ed. by B. Dietz, H. Gabel and U. Tiedau (Münster: Waxman, 2003), vol. 1, pp. 291-323.

¹⁴ H. Strallhofer-Mitterbauer, *NS-Literaturpreise für österreichische Autoren. Eine Dokumentation* (Wien, Köln and Weimar: Böhlau, 1994), p. 112.

¹⁵ F. Haepers, 'De roman van een vorstelijken rebel', in *Volk en Kultuur* 2:24 (1942), p. 2.

in times of shortage. In 1941, it fused with Werthner, Schuster & Co to become the Wiener Verlagsgesellschaft.¹⁶ Kremser's book appears to have been remarkably successful and long-lived in the book club trade with re-printings in Vienna, Berlin, Leipzig, Salzburg, Stuttgart, and Zurich (1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1949, 1950, 1956, 1960). The Belgian translation of Kremser's novel was published by the Uitgeversfonds Were di, which Jan Lampo calls 'een uitgeverijtje van collaborateurs'¹⁷ [a small collaborationist publisher].

II.

For Kotzde-Kottenrodt, the dual narrative of William of Orange and the birth of the Netherlands is to be understood on the model of *Volk* and *Führer*. In a 1934 homage to Kotzde, Karl Schwarz writes: '[Kotzdes] Schaffensziel heißt einfach und klar: Ein Mann und ein Volk! [which is, incidentally, the subtitle of his *Wilhelmus*.] Alle seine Führergestalten holt er aus der Vergangenheit, aus jenen Zeiten, wo immer wieder das Volk sich anschickte, unter einem berufenen Führer eine Einheit, eine Volkheit zu werden'¹⁸ [Kotzde's creative goal was simple and clear: One man and one people! He derives all of his Führer-figures from the past, from those times, wherever a people prepared to become a unity, a *Volkheit*, under an appointed Führer]. What drives the narrative is a conception of history that is primordial and beyond reason, that shows how a *Volk* and a *Führer* arise organically from the irrational forces of history and nature. '[Oranien] weiß, welchen Gefahren diese Schar entgegengeht. Aber es ist ein Volk im Werden, in Drang und Sturm und Not. Wann wäre je ein Volk anders geboren'¹⁹ [Orange knows what dangers this crowd will face. But it is a people in the process of becoming, in *Drang* and *Sturm* and distress].

Even if the underlying narrative structure conforms to the fundamental pattern of Nazi conceptions of history, Kotzde's *Wilhelmus* is driven by an ideological agenda that relies in part on a canny appropriation of Flemish nationalist material. We see this in the opening lines of the novel:

Von Vlaanderns weiten Ebenen braust ein *Sturm* daher. Er fährt über Brabant hin, über Brabant, das so viele herrliche Kirchen hat. Der Wilde, der Unbedachte besinnt sich nicht und macht auch vor den düster drohenden Eifelbergen nicht halt. Er peitscht den Rhein, der sich eben aus dem Joch der Berge windet, daß die Wellen drunten rollen und schäumen. Er springt, er jauchzt über den Westerwald hin. Alles ein Land, alles ein Land. *Hou zee, hou zee,*

¹⁶ 'A. Luser Verlag (Eckardt-Verlag Adolf Luser, Wiener Verlagsges.m.b.H.) (Wien-Leipzig)', in *Österreichische Verlagsgeschichte*, http://verlagsgeschichte.murrayhall.com/?page_id=375 Accessed 1 February 2018.

¹⁷ <https://janlampo.com/2011/12/07/de-vergeten-frans-carolina-ridwit-1908-1980-hier-openbaart-zich-ongetwijfeld-een-sterk-dramatisch-vermogen/>. Accessed 1 February 2018.

¹⁸ K. Schwarz, 'Wilhelm Kotzde-Kottenrodt. Der Kämpfer um deutsches Volkstum!', unpublished manuscript, Huzenbach (1934), Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

¹⁹ W. Kotzde-Kottenrodt, *Wilhelmus von Nassauen: Ein Mann und ein Volk* (Stuttgart: Steinkopf Verlag, 1933), p. 248.

hussa, hallo, ich will die Schlafenden wecken! Er fährt mitten zwischen Wetzlar und Siegen hindurch. Er braust, er heult, er knattert um die Mauern der Dillenburg,²⁰

[From Flanders' wide expanses a gathering storm roars. It flies across Brabant, across Brabant, home to many churches. The wild, thoughtless storm doesn't hesitate and neither does it stop in front of the dark threatening Eifel mountains. It whips the Rhine, that has only just released itself from the yoke of the mountains, such that the waves roll and froth. It leaps, it exults across the Westerwald. It's all one land, all one land. *Hou zee, hou zee*, huzzah, hello, I want to wake those who sleep! It travels right between Wetzlar and Siegen. It roars, it cries, it rattles against the wall of Dillenburg.]

The metaphor of the storm that reaches across Flanders, the Rhine, and into the Westerwald, where it knocks on Dillenburg's door, so to speak, could be construed as establishing the connection between the Dutch provinces and William of Orange. There is, however, more to it than that. A few pages later, Kotzde picks up and expands on the metaphor:

Über Vlaandern und Brabant, über Holland und Zeeland braust noch immer der Frühlingssturm. Die Wogen des Meeres donnern an den Küsten der Provinzen. Doch die Stunde der Niederlande ist noch nicht gekommen. Vergebens auch erhebt *der Blaufuß* seinen Schrei: *Hou zee, hou zee!* Er klastert umsonst seine Schwingen über den schäumenden Wogen, die sich am Strande brechen. Nein, dieses Volk ist noch nicht erwacht und reibt sich kaum die schlummernden Augen.²¹

[Across Flanders and Brabant, across Holland and Zeeland the storm continues to roar. The waves of the ocean thunder against the coasts of the provinces. The hour of the Netherlands has not yet come. The bluefoot raises his cry in vain: *Hou zee, hou zee!* In vain the bird beats its wings above the foaming waves that break on the beach. No, this people is not yet awake and barely rubs its slumbering eyes.]

By adding the *Blaufuß* to the terms already in play (*Sturm* and *Hou zee!*), Kotzde offers a coded reference to Albrecht Rodenbach's song 'De Blauwvoet'²² (1875), the anthem of the nineteenth-century Flemish Catholic student group known as the 'Blauwvoeten', and thus also to Hendrik Consience's novel *De Kerels van Vlaanderen* [The Boys of Flanders] (1870), which inspired Rodenbach.

Throughout the novel, the narrator and eventually William himself search the skies for the *Blaufuß* and listen for his call, which is inevitably rendered as 'Hou zee!' After the Union of Delft

²⁰ Kotzde-Kottenrodt, *Wilhelmus*, p. 5. My emphasis.

²¹ Kotzde-Kottenrodt, *Wilhelmus*, pp. 11-2. My emphasis.

²² Ei! het lied der Vlaamse zonen, / met zijn wilde noordertonen, / met het oude Vlaams Hoezee. / Vliegt de blauwvoet? Storm op zee! https://nl.wikisource.org/wiki/De_Blauwvoet. Accessed 1 February 2018. The bluefoot is a marine bird, not to be confused with the blue-footed booby. While it is prominently featured in Rodenbach's song, the precise ornithological identity of the bird is controversial. See W. Deconinck and O. Dochy, 'Welke vogel is de mysterieuze Blauwvoet?', in *VOB Jaarboek* (2015), pp. 129-52. <https://vob-ond.be/resources/Jaarboeken/Download/2015/Blauwvoet.pdf>. Accessed 30 January 2019.

in 1576, Kotzde links an increasing rage among the people against the Spanish crown to William's ability to form a new order from chaos:

Immer wilder braust der Sturm über den Niederlanden. [...] Der Blaufuß schwingt sich über Vlaandern herauf, er rauscht über Brabant hin und nimmt seinen Flug bis ins ferne Friesland. Hou zee! Hou zee! Man hört seinen Ruf allerorten. Man sieht die Bande fallen, die der Schrecken den Menschen anlegte. Das Wunderjahr erneuert sich. Es ist wieder ein Traum über dem Land. Nur, daß der Führer da ist, dem sie lauschen und dessen Wort zu allen dringt.²³

[The storm rages ever more wildly across the Netherlands. The bluefoot ascends over Flanders, it sweeps across Brabant sets its course as far as distant Friesland. Hou zee! Hou zee! Its call is heard everywhere. We see the bonds fall, with which the Terror had bound people. The year of wonder is renewed. Once again there is a dream in the land. But now, a Führer is there, whom they listen to and whose penetrating words reach them all.]

As the church bells ring from various quarters, William tells his wife Charlotte: 'Ich höre noch einen Ton! Der Blaufuß schreit über Vlaandern. Er ruft: Alles ein Land! Alles ein Land! Ich wartete lange darauf.'²⁴ [I hear another tone! The bluefoot cries above Flanders. It calls out: All one nation! All one nation! Long I have waited for this.] At the novel's conclusion, as the assassinated body of William is buried, the *Blaufuß* appears once more, circles over Moritz of Nassau, William's older son and first successor, as well as over his infant son, Friedrich Heinrich, who will succeed Moritz. The last words of the novel are: 'Der Blaufuß schreit! Hou zee! Hou zee! Die Freiheit darf niemals verloren sein.'²⁵ [The bluefoot cries! Hou zee! Hou zee! Freedom may never again be lost.]

Let's take stock of the anomalies occasioned by Kotzde's recourse to 'De Blauwvoet'. A Nazi-affiliated German novelist writes a novel about the father of the Netherlands and uses as his primary symbol the image of the *Blaufuß* and the related expressions 'Storm op zee' and 'Hou zee,' which he derives from a well-known Flemish nationalist fighting song. What are the implicit politics of this appropriation? Do they favor *Groot-Nederland* or the *Großgermanisches Reich*? In Kotzde's take on the Union of Utrecht, the emphasis is not on its limited membership, but its possible openness and expansion to others:

Vlaandern und Brabant hören die Stimme von Utrecht. Sie wollen nicht zurückbleiben. Die Städte Brüssel, Lier, Antwerpen, Gent, Brügge, Yperen [sic] schließen sich der Utrechter Einigung an. Ganz Friesland folgt, auch Overijssel und das Land Drenthe. Es liegt klärlich vor aller Welt, daß das germanische Gewissen frei vor Gott stehen will.²⁶

²³ Kotzde-Kottenrodt, *Wilhelmus*, p. 309.

²⁴ Kotzde-Kottenrodt, *Wilhelmus*, p. 313.

²⁵ Kotzde-Kottenrodt, *Wilhelmus*, p. 350.

²⁶ Kotzde-Kottenrodt, *Wilhelmus*, p. 327.

[Flanders and Brabant hear the voice of Utrecht. They don't want to be left behind. The cities of Brussels, Lier, Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges, Ypres join the Utrechter Union. All of Friesland follows suit, also Overijssel and the land of Drenthe. It's there for all the world to see that the Germanic conscience wants to stand freely before God.]

William is said to have a vision that includes 'die Menschen des Nordens' [the people of the North] and 'die Völker des Nordens' [the peoples of the North].²⁷ Does the flight and the call of the *Blaufuß* in this 1933 novel already lay the groundwork for the incorporation of Belgium and the Netherlands into the *Reich*?

When it comes to the Dutch translation of Kotzde's *Blaufuß*-agenda eleven years later, things are even more complicated. The opening lines faithfully render Kotzde's, except when it comes to the bird's call: 'Alles één land, alles één land! Hoera, hoera, hallo, ik wil de slapenden wekken! Ik wek trouwens alles wat slaapt!' [It's all one land, all one land! Hooray, hooray, hello, I want to wake those who sleep! Indeed, I wake everything that sleeps!].²⁸ Likewise, at the novel's conclusion and every point in between there is no 'Hou zee!': 'De blauwvoet roept. Nooit zal de vrijheid meer verloren gaan!' [The bluefoot calls. Never again shall freedom be lost!].²⁹ In Jef van Eyck's translation of the last pages of Kotzde's novel in *Volk en Cultuur*, by contrast, we read: 'De Blauwvoet roept! Hou zee! Hou zee! De Vrijheid sterft nooit!' [The bluefoot calls! Hou zee! Hou zee! Freedom never dies!].³⁰ It's clear that Theunisz intentionally dispensed with the 'Hou zee!' for reasons that are not difficult to surmise. A history of the first decade of the NSB reports that Cees van Geelkerken knowingly used the 'Hou zee!'—which in the Dutch case putatively comes not from Rodenbach or Conscience, but from Michiel de Ruyter—in combination with the Nazi salute at a meeting in 1933 in IJmuiden.³¹ It is further claimed that the use of 'Hou zee!' instead of the Hitler salute was a way in which the NSB later distinguished itself from the Dutch SS, to the latter's consternation.³² Insofar as Theunisz rejected the NSB's dream of a *Groot-Nederland*, he maintained the Greater Germanic vision of Kotzde's novel, and divested it of any trace of

²⁷ Kotzde-Kottenrodt, *Wilhelmus*, p. 333-4.

²⁸ Kotzde-Kottenrodt, *Wilhelmus van Nassouwe: 'Een man en een volk'*, J. Theunisz (transl.) (Voorburg: Ernst Dzur, 1944), p. 5.

²⁹ Kotzde-Kottenrodt, *Wilhelmus van Nassouwe*, p. 343.

³⁰ Kotzde-Kottenrodt, 'De Dood van Oranje', Jef van Eyck (transl.), in *Volk en Cultuur* 2:24 (1942), p. 20.

³¹ 'In een vergadering te IJmuiden besluit van Geelkerken zijn toespraak met gestrekte arm en roept de stampvolle zaal toe: Hou Zee! De IJmuidenaren, die door het wonen aan de zee den band met de roemrijke historie hebben bewaard, begrijpen direct de bedoeling. Den groet van De Ruyter en Tromp kennen zij natuurlijk nog, en als één man veert de zaal recht overeind en beantwoordt den spreker eveneens met 'Hou Zee!' In korten tijd gaat het 'Hou Zee!' door alle kringen en groepen der Beweging.' [In a meeting in IJmuiden, van Geelkerken ends his speech with raised arm and calls out to the jampacked room: Hou Zee! The residents of IJmuiden, who by virtue of living on the coast have preserved the connection to that glorious history, immediately grasp the meaning. They still recall the greeting of De Ruyter and Tromp, and as one the leap upright and respond likewise to the speaker with 'Hou Zee!'. In short order, the 'Hou Zee' is taken up by all circles and groups of the Movement.] C. van Geelkerken (ed.), *Voor Volk en Vaderland: tien jaren strijd van de Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging der Nederlanden 1931 - 14 december - 1941* (Utrecht: Nenasu, 1943), p. 170.

³² <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Houzee>. Accessed 9 April 2017. Karen Shelby shows that the VNV picked up the Dutch 'Hou zee!' salute for Flemish nationalist purposes associated with the greater Diets nation (K. D. Shelby, *Flemish Nationalism and the Great War: The Politics of Memory, Visual Culture and Commemoration* (New York: Palgrave, MacMillan, 2014), p. 242).

association with the NSB at the cost of diminishing the allusion to the Flemish Bluefoot movement.

III.

Turning now to Kremser's *Der stille Sieger*, it is important to note the striking differences with Kotzde's *Wilhelmus*. The latter is a high-energy narrative often related in the present tense, with alternating scenes of military action and vigorous conversation. William is an instinctive *Führer* in the process of organically summoning forth his *Volk*. Kremser's William, on the other hand, is a shrewd political thinker. Not only does Kremser avoid the use of dialogue, he also prefers to relate events through the reflective and retrospective or even, occasionally, prospective thought processes of William, primarily, but also other characters, such as Philipp II, Alba, or Gérard, William's assassin. He thus avoids the present tense. William comes across as an almost Schmittian political thinker painstakingly managing the difficult creation of a nation.

Kremser keeps things at a remove, also for the reader. Egmont's arrest is played out in thought by Alba as he waits for Egmont to arrive. His execution is viewed from a distance and deliberately out of earshot: 'Mit wilden Rucken ging sein Kopf hin und her, sein Mund öffnete sich, schreiende Worte gellten über den Platz, niemand verstand sie, und nun fingen die Trommel zu dröhnen an und verschlangen jeden Ton seiner Stimme. [...] unverständliches Gespräch ging zwischen ihm und dem Bischof, vielleicht war es seine letzte Beichte.'³³ [His head went back and forth with wild thrusts, his mouth opened, screamed words shrilled across the square, no one understood them, and now the drums started to resound and swallowed every sound. The conversation between him and the bishop was incomprehensible, perhaps it was his last confession.] Against the predominant heroic tradition where Egmont declines the use of a blindfold, Kremser has him ask for one. Orange regards Egmont as a traitor;³⁴ Alba sees him as a pompous fool.³⁵

At times, it almost seems as if Kremser's novel seeks recourse to the coded language of the inner emigration. William uses the language of exile to reflect on the need to leave Flanders and retreat to Dillenburg in order to evade arrest and the fate of Egmont and Hoorn. The sound heard when Egmont is greeted by guards outside Alba's chamber is puzzlingly anachronistic: 'Draußen erhob sich Geräusch, das Klappen zusammenschlagender Hacken.'³⁶ [There was a noise outside, the sharp sound of heels clicking together.] Is the reader being tipped off? While Kotzde breezily skips over Orange's *Apologie*, Kremser offers a condensed version as a paean to freedom and a critique of tyranny in an independent chapter. Nothing in principle prevents the critical reader from identifying Hitler with Philipp II and decoding the *Apologie* as an endorsement of revolution and assassination. Whether Haepers or his Dutch readership took note of this is an open question.

³³ R. Kremser, *Der stille Sieger: Der Roman eines fürstlichen Rebellen* (Vienna: Wiener Verlagsgesellschaft, 1941), pp. 246-7.

³⁴ Kremser, *Sieger*, p. 198.

³⁵ Kremser, *Sieger*, p. 226.

³⁶ Kremser, *Sieger*, p. 229.

These speculations have to be balanced against (or can they be integrated with?) other moments in the novel, such as the extensive exposition of William's thoughts as he reads through the Union of Utrecht in a chapter by that name. It's a remarkable chapter. William recognizes his handiwork as 'ein guter Baumeister' [a good builder], but regrets that 'der Bau kleiner ausfallen [würde], als im Plan vorgesehen' [that the building turned out smaller than planned]:

Von seinem großen Traum, die Provinzen ehrenvoll und sicher im alten Mutterboden des Reiches zu verankern, hatte Wilhelm nach vielen vergeblichen Versuchen Abschied nehmen müssen. Die Deutschen lagen zu tief im Staub und im Schutt ihrer zerfallenden Größe versunken [...] Das Vaterland, das der Mann aus Nassau im Herzen trug, war zu groß für die kleinen Seelen der Zeit. So mußte er denn seinen Traum einer Zukunft überantworten, in deren Schoß er der Wirklichkeit entgegenreifen mochte. Aber auch das Bild der siebzehn vereinigten Provinzen wollte nicht zu lebendiger Wirklichkeit werden. [...] Der Süden des Landes konnte sich aus der vielfältigen Verstrickung, in der ihn die tausend Arme der spanischen und pfäffischen Hydra gefangen hielten, nicht mehr befreien. [...] Dieser Teil des Landes hatte seine eigene Art verloren und schied sich damit selbst von dem andern, der sich täglich sicherer in rasch und kräftig aufblühenden Formen eines neuen jungen Daseins bewegte.³⁷

[After many vain attempts to anchor the provinces honorably and securely in the old maternal soil of the Reich, William had to take leave of his grand dream. The Germans were too mired in the dust and rubble of their collapsing grandeur. The fatherland that the man from Nassau cherished in his heart was too big for the small souls of his time. He would have to bequeath his dream to a future in whose lap it could mature into reality. But even the picture of seventeen united provinces refused to become a living reality. The South of the land was unable to free itself of the multifaceted entanglement in which it was held captive by the Spanish and popish hydra. This part of the land had lost its own essence and thus separated itself from the other, which daily and more assuredly inhabited the rapidly and powerfully blossoming forms of its new, young existence.]

Haepers' translation is more specific: 'Dit deel van het land had zijn eigen aard verloren en scheidde zich daardoor zelf van het Noorden af, dat dagelijks zekerder in snel openbloeiende kracht zijn eigen nieuw leven bevestigde.'³⁸ [This part of the land had lost its own essence and thus separated itself from the North, which daily and more assuredly inhabited the rapidly and powerfully blossoming forms of its new, young existence.]

In addition to these clear expressions of regret for failed conceptions of a *Groot-Nederland* anchored in the Reich, William engages in Schmittian reflection on the process of national formation: 'Langsam war der Bund gewachsen, hatte Verwandtes angezogen, Feindliches abgestoßen, jetzt stand er mit schlichter Selbstverständlichkeit da, seiner Notwendigkeit ebenso gewiß wie seiner Dauer.'³⁹ [The federation had grown slowly, had attracted what was related to

³⁷ Kremser, *Sieger*, p. 333-4.

³⁸ Kremser, *De Vorstelijke Rebel: Historische roman*, F. Haepers (transl.) (Antwerp: Uitgeversfonds Were di, 1944) p. 325.

³⁹ Kremser, *Sieger*, p. 334.

it, repelled the hostile, now it stood there with simple naturalness, confident as much of its necessity as its duration.] His thought then takes a decidedly blasphemous and un-Calvinist turn:

Er war ein Gott der Menschen geworden, der ihrer toten Materie Atem eingehaucht, ihr zerstücktes Dasein zu einem Ganzen geordnet, ihnen einen Willen und einen Geist gegeben und ein Ziel geschenkt hatte, das auf Jahrhunderte vorhielt, bis ihm von einem größeren Ablösung kommen mochte.⁴⁰

[He had become a god of the people, who had suffused their dead materiality with breath, ordered their dismembered existence into a whole, gave them a will and a spirit and presented them with a goal that would endure for centuries until he be replaced by one greater.]

If the German suggests that the 'greater one' still to come might (or might not) be Hitler, the Dutch translation dilutes the suggestion by replacing the implied human agent with 'een grootere toekomst' [a grander future].⁴¹

Blasphemous tendencies continue as, a little later in the novel, a Christ-like William confronts, in thought, intimations of his likely assassination at the hands of the suspicious individual he had seen in the hallway of the Prinsenhof in Delft:

Tief griff eine zerrrende Hand in seine Brust: es war die Angst vor dem nahenden Kelch, die in ihm mächtig geworden war. Das Zittern, das ihn befallen hatte, kündigte ihm sein Gethsemane mit allen Schrecknissen einer ihm bisher unbekannt gewesenen Menschenfurcht an. [...] Die Speise lag unberührt, nur vom danebenliegenden Brot war ein Stück gebrochen, und der aufwartende Page füllte eben wieder den geleerten Becher. Es war wie ein letztes Abendmahl. Er verwarf sogleich den Gedanken als blasphemisch und war doch nicht imstande, ihn abzuschütteln. Das hohe Gleichnis span sich von selber weiter. [...] Auch er war von Jüngern und einer hoffenden Gemeinde umgeben, die, durch Wunder verwöhnt, einen vielleicht allzu seichten Glauben gewonnen hatte. Was an diesem echt und tief war und vor den Zeiten bestand, konnte erst offenbar werden, wenn der Meister nicht mehr über dem Werke waltete. Denn nur durch den Hingang des Schöpfers erwies sich die Mündigkeit des Geschaffenen; erst die geopferte Gottheit macht die Menschen frei.⁴²

[A ripping hand grasped deeply into his chest: it was the fear about the approaching chalice that had arisen in him. The trembling that befell him announced his impending Gethsemane with all the horrors of a human fearfulness hitherto unknown to him. Food was untouched on his plate, merely a piece of the bread next to it had been broken off, and the attending page was just in the process of refilling the cup. As if it were the last supper. He immediately rejected the blasphemous thought and yet was unable to shake it off. The noble allegory stretched further of its own volition. He too was surrounded by disciples and a hopeful congregation, which, spoiled by miracles, had perhaps developed an all too facile belief. What

⁴⁰ Kremser, *Sieger*, p. 336.

⁴¹ Kremser, *Rebel*, p. 327.

⁴² Kremser, *Sieger*, p. 355.

was real and profound and ahead of its time could only be revealed after the Master no longer ruled over his work. For only through the death of the creator would the maturity of the creation be evident, it is the sacrificed divinity that sets the people free.]

What is still stranger than the heretical, auto-hagiographic strains of the thoughts attributed to Orange is the fact that Kremser chooses to end the novel with two perspectives on his death, both narrated in their own right, one after the other, with first Orange registering the blast that kills him, then the same narrative being told from the assassin's point of view. He relates the thoughts of the assassin without finding them repellent, indeed plays out their inner Catholic logic:

Ja, das gerade war es, was ihm die Pistole gegen den dort oben in die Hand drückte! Der ergebene Frieden der Vielen, dieses einzige sichere Gut der Kleinen und Armen, war dahin, seit die Wenigen die tröstenden Gewohnheiten des überlieferten Weltganges bezweifelten, prüften und verneinten, statt sie zu bejahen und sie den Schwächeren als die sichere Bahn ihres bescheidenen Wandels zu erhalten. [...] So untergrub der Hochmut einzelner die heilige Gemeinde der Millionen. So untergrub der hochgeborene Ketzer Oranien die Pfeiler der Kirche und der ihr dienenden Macht des Katholischen Königs. Aber heute kam einer aus der Tiefe der von ihnen gehüteten Ordnung, und er dankte der Ruhe, die sie seiner Seele gewährten, durch die Hand, die er ihnen gegen ihren größten Feind lieh.⁴³

[Yes, precisely that was what pressed the pistol into his hand against the one upstairs. The devoted freedom of the many, this sole secure blessing of the small and poor, was gone ever since the few began to doubt, test and deny the consoling customs of the traditional ways, instead of affirming and preserving them for the weaker as the certain track of their modest path. Thus, the pride of a few undermined the holy community of millions. Thus, the highborn heretic Orange undermined the buttresses of the church and the power of her Catholic kings. Yet today, one came from the depths of the world order they protected, and he showed his gratitude for the peacefulness they provided his soul through his hand, which he now raised against their greatest enemy.]

A paragraph later Gérard fires the shot and Orange is struck, again. The novel concludes. But what kind of conclusion is this? And how did it resound in Flanders? An Austrian, presumably Catholic writer ends a novel translated into Dutch in an occupied Catholic Belgium with the pious and even reasonable cogitations of the Spanish assassin. What dies (or lives) with Orange and his sacrifice? *Das Großgermanische Reich*? *Groot-Nederland*? Something else altogether? The ambiguity of this cultural transfer is unresolvable.

IV.

On the last page of *De Vorstelijke Rebel*, we find a brief, enigmatic note from the translator, Frans Haepers. Written in the first-person plural ('wij'), the note maintains that Kremser's dramatic rendering of Orange's life 'nergens meer belangstelling zou moeten wekken en zal wekken, dan in de Nederlanden zelf. Hierdoor alleen meenen wij het vertalen van dit werk meer dan voldoende

⁴³ Kremser, *Sieger*, pp. 361-2.

gemotiveerd' [should awaken and will awaken nowhere more interest than in the Netherlands itself. On this count alone we deem the translation of this work more than amply justified].⁴⁴ A subjunctive with an imperative edge ('zou moeten wekken') and a future case ('zal wekken') with regard to an imagined readership in the Netherlands – to which the book had no access in the narrow sense because of the closed border and ambiguously plural in the wider, an afterthought to the Willem of Orange number of *Volk en Kultuur* – still to be roused from slumber. While the ambiguity of Kremser/Haepers' Orange seems to contain a latent, if inscrutable critical potential that the Kotzde-Kottenrodt/Theunisz Orange obviously does not, it does not appear that Haepers' effort to graft a German Orange onto Flemish nationalist sentiment enjoyed any significant resonance. The constraints of the occupation, beginning with the necessity of relying on two German novels about Orange, proved too much. Meanwhile, in Germany, in the Netherlands, and in exile, the figure of William of Orange offered *some* writers and readers an opportunity to imagine resistance or to interpret the Third Reich and its aftermath allegorically, at least for a time. Fritz von Unruh's 1953 tragedy *Wilhelmus*, a play about the assassination of Orange as a critique of Adenauer's plan to remilitarize West Germany, marks the obsolescence of Orange for all but the Netherlands.

Or does it? At the *IJzerwake* of 1995, the radical Flemish nationalist alternative to the Yzer Pilgrimage, the underlying motifs that animated the two novels begin to come back into view. 'The pilgrimage tag from the 1995 coming depicts a hand raised in the oath [to the Allegiance of Flanders, practically indistinguishable from the Hou zee and the Nazi salute, SR]. [...] A *blauwvoet* bird, an appropriate symbol for this ceremony due to its associations with the nineteenth century student movement, is placed to the left.'⁴⁵ The *IJzerwake* preserved the oath, which the Yzer Pilgrimage had eliminated in 2004, and combined it in the program's conclusion with three songs: the *Lion of Flanders*, the *Wilhelmus*, 'and the anthem of South Africa, *Die Stem* – in Afrikaans'⁴⁶ (209-10). In this expression of the vision of a Greater Netherlands there is no room for ambiguity.

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⁴⁴ Kremser, *Rebel*, p. 352.

⁴⁵ Shelby, *Flemish Nationalism*, p. 209.

⁴⁶ Shelby, *Flemish Nationalism*, pp. 209-10.

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